

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 DPW-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

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S E C R E T SAIGON 12807

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINT, VS

SUBJECT: HIGH-LEVEL VIEW ON CEASE FIRE IMPLEMENTATION AND
TERRITORY DELINEATION

THE FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM AMCONSUL CAN THO DATED 14 JULY
IS REPEATED HERE FOR YOUR ACTION/ INFO:

QUOTE

S E C R E T CAN THO 0574

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS MILI, PINT, VS

SUBJECT: HIGH-LEVEL VIEW ON CEASEFIRE IMPLEMENTATION AND TERRITORY
DELINEATION

1. BGEN NGUYEN THANH HOANG, ACTINV DEPUTY COMMANDER OF
MR IV SAID JULY 13 THAT ALTHOUGH FIGHTING HAS SLOWED CN
THE DELTA, HOSTILITIES HAVE BY NO MEANS STOPPED. HE THEN
ASSERTED, IN TONES FULL OF CONVICTION, THAT NEITHER THE
GOVERNMENT NOR THE FRONT WILL EVER STOP FIGHTING UNLESS
OUTSIDE POWERS APPLY PRESSURE TO THEM BOTH.

2. HOANG WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL

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DIFFICULTY THE GVN FACES AT THE PRESENT TIME IN THE

DELTA IS ITS INABILITY TO PROVE THAT IT OWN TERRITORY WHICH IT CLAIMS TO BE UNDER ITS CONTROL. "IN A GIVEN AREA," HE SAID, "THERE MAY BE ONE OF OUR REGIMENTS AND ONE OF THEIRS. WE BOTH CLAIM WE OWN THE AREA." HOANG AGREED THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION MIGHT BE TO TRADE OFF AREAS, HE SAID HE WAS NOT OPPOSED TO A DECISION IN PRINCIPLE TO GIVE TERRITORY TO THE OTHER SIDE AS PART OF AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT, BUT HE COULD NOT OR WOULD NOT NAME ANY ZONES THAT THE GVN WOULD BE WILLING TO OFFER.

3. THE POLITICAL OFFICER ASKED HOANG IN THIS CONNECTION ABOUT THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF CHUONG THIEN PROVINCE. THE POLITICAL OFFICER SAID IT APPEARED THAT DURING MOST OF CEASEFIRE II THE GVN HAD TACITLY CEDED THE AREA TO THE OTHER SIDE. HOANG REPLIED THAT THE VC/NVA ARE NEWCOMERS TO THE AREA. HE SAID THE FOUR OUTPOSTS ALONG THE MAIN CANAL WERE NOT TAKEN BY THE OTHER SIDE UNTIL AFTER CEASE-FIRE I. HE SAID THAT ONE OF THE VILLAGES THERE, ON THE BA XUYEN BORDER, WAS A CATHOLIC VILLAGE WHOSE INHABITANTS WOULD CERTAINLY BE ADVERSE TO VC/NVA CONTROL. THERE COULD BE NO QUESTION, THEREFORE, OF SIMPLY CONCEDING THIS TERRAIN TO THE OTHER SIDE. ASKED ABOUT PRESENT CONTROL OF THE CANAL, HOANG SAID THAT GVN FORCES HAVE RETAKEN THE FOUR OUTPOSTS ALONG THE CANAL ON THE CHUONG THIEN SIDE. ON THE PHONG DINH SIDE, GOVERNMENT TROOPS HAVE MOVED IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION DOWN THE CANAL, THE OBJECT BEING FOR THE TWO GROUPS OF TROOPS TO MEET UP WITH ONE ANOTHER AT THE PHONG DINH/CHUONG THIEN BORDER. HOANG SAID THAT THESE UNITS HAVE NEARED THEIR OBJECTIVE: ONLY THAT STRETCH OF THE CANAL IMMEDIATELY ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER IS YET TO BE SECURED. COMMENTING ON THE REMOVAL SEVERAL DAYS AGO OF TWO BATTALIONS OF THE VCO-1 REGIMENT FROM CHUONG THIEN TO PHONG DINH (CAN THO 0572), HOANG SEEMED TO DISMISS THIS ASPECT AS UNIMPORTANT. HE SAID THAT THE TWO BATTALIONS CROSS BETWEEN THE TWO PROVINCES CONSTANTLY. IT WAS APPARENT THAT HOANG'S MAIN CONCERN WAS CONTROL OF THE CANAL RATHER THAN THE D-1'S PRESENCE IN THE ADJACENT HINTERLANDS.

4. COMMENT: BGEN HOANG SHOWED A SLIGHTLY LARGER
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CONCILIATORY SPIRIT THAN USUAL BY AGREEING IN PRINCIPLE WITH THE NECESSITY TO OFFER TERRITORY TO THE OTHER SIDE IN REACHING A FINAL SETTLEMENT. AS IS HIS WONT, HOWEVER, HE EMPHASIZED THE SEVERE DIFFICULTIES IN DIVIDING DELTA TERRAIN TO SATISFY THE ASPIRATIONS OF BOTH SIDES. THE CHUONG THIEN EXAMPLE WAS ILLUSTRATIVE. NO MATTER HOW TENUOUS ITS HOLD ON AN AREA, THE GVN IS SHOWING GREAT RELUCTANCE IN SURRENDERING TERRAIN. NOT SURPRISINGLY,

HOANG FINDS IT EASIER TO AGREE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF
DIVISION OF TERRITORY THAN TO DEVISE ACCEPTABLE WAYS OF
IMPLEMENTING THAT PRINCIPLE.

LEHMANN

UNQUOTE.

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NNN

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